

Health | January 29, 2018 | By Korin Miller

# How to Heal the Roof of Your Mouth After You've Burned It

Been there, burned that.



You know the feeling: You accidentally take a swig of scalding hot coffee or go for an aggressive bite of just-delivered pizza and immediately regret it. Chrissy Teigen has been there—she recently struggled with a microwaveable sandwich and tweeted about the aftermath.

"I burned the roof of my mouth with a Jimmy Dean sandwich and there is white flesh hanging from my mouth roof like the curtains of a worn-down theater," she wrote on Twitter on Sunday. Fans were quick to sympathize. "I think I have permanent scars on the roof of my mouth from eating too many Hot Pockets in college," one person wrote. "Been there dude," another said.

## The roof of your mouth (a.k.a. the palate) is covered with skin.

And, just like skin on any other part of your body, the skin in your mouth can experience first-, second-, and third-degree burns, **Gary Goldenberg, M.D.**, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, tells SELF.



First-degree burns are the most mild and they impact the outer layer of skin (the epidermis). These burns usually just cause redness, Dr. Goldenberg says. Second-degree burns are more severe and impact the epidermis and dermis (the lower layer of skin). These burns can cause pain, redness, swelling, and blistering. Third-degree burns are the most intense. They go through the epidermis and dermis and impact tissues below that. These burns can leave your skin white or black, and can even make it feel temporarily numb.

If you drink a hot coffee and quickly spit it out, it's probably more likely that you'll get a first-degree burn, Susan L. Besser, M.D., a primary-care physician at Mercy Medical Center, tells SELF. But if you bite into something with scalding hot cheese, which really holds heat and can stick to the roof of your mouth, you're probably going to get a second-degree burn, she says.

When you get any type of burn on the roof of your mouth, your body is going to send white blood cells to the site to try to heal it from below (meaning you'll experience some swelling), Dr. Besser says. "But the surface layer is dead," she says, "[so] it's going to slough off," meaning it's going to peel. If you have a first-degree burn, this is going to happen on a microscopic level, and you won't notice it, she says. But if you have a second-degree burn, the whole top layer will peel off—and you'll know it.

Luckily, once you get to that "curtains of a worn-down theater" point, as Teigen put it, you'll have healthy, normal, non-burned skin underneath.

## There's only so much you can do to treat a burn on the roof of your mouth, but there are ways to reduce your suffering.

First, put down the pizza (or whatever you're eating or drinking) ASAP. This is a burn, and if you keep doing what you're doing, you'll just keep damaging the sensitive tissue in your mouth, Mark S. Wolff, D.D.S., Ph.D., a professor and chairman of the Department of Cariology and Comprehensive Care at the New York University

College of Dentistry, tells SELF. Then, grab some ice water and swish it around in your mouth—this can help cool the tissue so the burn doesn't go as deep, Dr. Wolff says. "Like all skin burns, cooling the burn is critical," he says.

Unlike the skin on your arms and legs, you can't put lotion on the roof of your mouth. But the fact that it's in a moist environment works in your favor, Dr. Besser says. She recommends steering clear of hot liquids, anything acidic, and foods with rough edges while your mouth heals to avoid aggravating it even more. Depending on the severity of the burn, it may take a few days to a week to fully heal.

If you're in a lot of pain, Dr. Besser says you have a few options: You can take ibuprofen, which is an anti-inflammatory and may help with the swelling and pain, and you can even spray an over-the-counter oral analgesic like Chloraseptic on the area to help numb the pain. A topical benzocaine in an orabase like Orajel can also help, Dr. Wolff says. But, if you're really struggling or your burn isn't getting better, check in with your doctor. They may prescribe a more heavy-duty topical medication and will check to make sure you haven't developed an infection.

Don't worry, you'll be back to living your melty, cheesy dreams soon enough.